

The Secularist in Politics.

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political theories, but they did so from the theological standpoint, and if they used history it was merely to enforce the theocratic supremacy of the pope, or vindicate the divine right of the emperor. Whether they championed the pope or the emperor, they reasoned from the assumption that the basis of power is directly or indirectly divine, not human. This theological conception dominates their doctrines; their argumentation is largely, if not exclusively, based on the Bible and the Fathers. A stray voice, like that of Marsilio of Padua in the fourteenth century, may advocate a more rational notion of politics, but even Marsilio is still inspired by the eternal question of empire *versus* church. He is indeed daringly modern in some of his views, but he still conceives of the State as a universal empire, to which the Church ought to be subject. He does not disentangle the State from both Church and Empire, though the idea suggests itself to his mind.

On opening the "Discourses" and the "Prince" of Machiavelli, on the contrary, we lose touch of the mediaeval doctors, with their interminable argumentation about the sun and the moon, the spiritual and the temporal, church and empire, pope and kaiser. In Machiavelli we have the secularist in politics, the pagan in religion, the scientist in method. He brushes aside the schoolmen as mere formalists, and seeks to grapple with reality as unfolded in history. To him history is what natural phenomena are to the man of science, and he studies, weighs his facts apart altogether from any preconceived theological theory. It is this application of reason to history, untrammelled by traditional beliefs, that makes him a new man, a revolutionist in political thought. The "Prince" and the "Discourses" mark in this sense a revolution. In them we see the critical, rationalist spirit of the Renaissance at work in the field of politics. Machiavelli observes, experiments, in order to reach the laws of political societies. He may not do this correctly; he quotes when he should compare; he narrows his field of observation unduly to the history of Rome; he accepts the tales of Livy as historically veracious; he is content to assume the origins* of political society when he should have striven to demonstrate. He has no notion of progress by evolution, and assumes that ancient history, particularly Roman history, is the measure of all history. His conclusions may be hasty or